

For the Children

ABOUT A TOAD.

By Blanche Elizabeth Wade.

Once upon a time, a brown toad—oh, a very brown toad, indeed!—lived in a garden, and under a large stone, where it was dark and cool and moist.

"This," said he, "is the finest place to live in the whole world!"

He kept on thinking so, too, until one day he heard a yellow butterfly talking to a busy bumble-bee as one was fluttering and the other was buzzing about the same tall spike of larkspur.

"Good afternoon," said the yellow butterfly to the busy bumble-bee. "A beautiful day it is; is it not?"

"Fine!" said the good-natured, busy bumble-bee as he jammed the honey into his honey-bags.

"I have been thinking that the finest place to live, in all the world, is in the air in this garden," said the yellow butterfly.

"You are right," said the busy bumble-bee. "It is the finest place to live in all the world."

"Now, that is queer," said the toad. "I should feel very much out of place in the air, and I am sure they never have been under this great stone, or they would see how mistaken they are. This really is the finest place to live, whatever a yellow butterfly and a busy bumble-bee may say."

Then, down came a good robin to hunt for a worm in the ground.

"I'll ask him," said the toad. So he called out to the bird:

"Hi, there, Brother Robin! Tell me the answer to this question: Where is the finest place to live in all the world?"

"I think," said the robin, "the finest place to live in all the world is the top of a tree."

"Well, of all things!" said the toad. "That is the last place I should think of choosing," but the robin did not stay to listen any longer, for he found his worm and flew away.

"I shall go out for a short walk and get someone else to tell me who is right about this matter," said the toad. So out he went from under the great stone, hop, hop, across the garden path and into the soft grass. There he met a large, green grasshopper.

"Good afternoon," he said to the large, green grasshopper. "I have come to ask you a serious question. Come, tell me, which is the finest place to live in all the world? The yellow butterfly and the busy bumble-bee say it is the air in this garden, and the good robin says it is the top of a tree; but I think it is the dark, cool, moist spot under a great stone. Now, what do you think?"

"I think you are all wrong," said the large, green grasshopper. "The only place worth while is this sunny lawn. On a hot day it is the finest thing you ever saw!"

"Why," said the toad, "that is a most surprising answer!"

"Well, ask the fat, brown cricket," said the large,

green grasshopper. "He will tell you the same thing." The fat, brown cricket said yes, that his friend had spoken truly.

"Any one would know that to be on this sunny lawn for any length of time would blister my back," said the very brown toad; so on he went till he came to a rail fence by the woods. Upon the lowest rail sat a small beetle, having a look at the world while he rested a few seconds.

"Good afternoon," said the toad. "I have a question for which no one yet has given me a fitting answer."

"What is your question?" asked the small beetle as he moved his feelers about.

"It is this," said the toad: "Which is the finest place to live in all the world?"

"I think," said the small beetle, "that the finest place to live in all the world is inside this fence rail."

"Well, I wonder at that," said the very brown toad. "I shall ask some one else," and under the rail he hopped into the woods.

Near a stump sat an old woodchuck.

"Good afternoon, Friend Woodchuck," said the very brown toad. "I have a question which must have an answer: Which is the finest place to live in all the world? The yellow butterfly and the busy bumble-bee say it is the air in the garden; the good robin says it is the top of a tree; the large, green grasshopper and the fat, brown cricket say it is the sunny lawn; and the small beetle says it is inside the fence rail; but I think it is the dark, cool, moist spot under a great stone. Now, what do you think?"

"I think you are the nearest right of any," said the old woodchuck. "The finest place in the world is a deep, dry, snug hole under the ground."

"The hole under the ground is good enough," said the very brown toad; "but I should not care to have it dry nor snug. You are only partly right, so I shall go farther till I find the correct answer."

On he went deeper into the wood till he came to a log. Upon the log a slippery snail was crawling along with its shell on its back.

"Well, well!" said the very brown toad. "Of all queer performances that is the queerest I ever have seen! What are you trying to carry on your back?"

"That," said the slippery snail, "is my shell. I have to carry it."

"That is a strange thing, indeed," said the very brown toad.

"Not at all," said the slippery snail. "It is my house, and it is the finest place to live in all the world."

"I never heard such nonsense!" said the very brown toad. "So I shall bid you good day, and go farther for the right answer."

The very brown toad then went on till he came to a funny spider, swinging from a bush.

"How are you, Mr. Spider?" said he.

"Very well, thank you," said the spider.

"That is good," said the very brown toad. "Do you know the answers to every question in the world?"

"Yes, indeed!" said the funny spider.

"Good!" said the very brown toad. "Now, please tell me which is the finest place to live in all the world."